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Letter dated 12 May 2016 from the Permanent Representatives of the Russian Federation and the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

We have the honour to forward to you the joint statement of the Russian Federation and the United States on Syria of 9 May 2016 (see annex).

We should be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Vitaly **Churkin**
Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation

(*Signed*) Samantha **Power**
Permanent Representative of the United States

16-07770 (E) 130516

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Annex to the letter dated 12 May 2016 from the Permanent Representatives of the Russian Federation and the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Joint statement of the Russian Federation and the United States on Syria

The Russian Federation and the United States of America, as Co-Chairs of the International Syria Support Group, recognize the progress that has been made with respect to the cessation of hostilities in Syria, in accordance with our joint statement of 22 February 2016, and in improving humanitarian access. We believe that our joint efforts have brought about a significant decrease in violence in the areas of north Latakia and east Ghouta. However, we also recognize the difficulties faced by the cessation of hostilities in several areas of the country, especially in the recent period, as well as remaining problems in ensuring humanitarian access to the besieged areas. As a result, we have decided to reconfirm our commitment to the cessation of hostilities in Syria and to intensify efforts to ensure its nationwide implementation. We also intend to enhance efforts to promote humanitarian assistance to all people in need in accordance with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015).

Cessation of hostilities

The Co-Chairs reaffirm our commitment to the nationwide cessation of hostilities that went into effect on 27 February across Syria and have decided to pursue the following measures to reinvigorate it:

1. Recognizing challenges related to the cessation of hostilities in certain areas, the Co-Chairs have re-emphasized the terms of the cessation of hostilities with field commanders on all sides, especially in Aleppo, eastern Ghouta and Latakia, where we are determined to improve and sustain the cessation of hostilities. We are using our influence with the parties to the cessation of hostilities on the ground to press them to abide by it, refrain from disproportionate responses to provocations and demonstrate restraint.

2. We demand that parties cease any indiscriminate attacks on civilians, including civilian infrastructure and medical facilities. Where attacks leading to significant civilian casualties are reported to have occurred, the Co-Chairs are committed to undertaking, within existing channels of interaction in Geneva, the region and capitals, a joint assessment and to sharing the results with the members of the International Syria Support Group Task Force on the Ceasefire and, through the Special Envoy for Syria, to the Security Council.

3. The Russian Federation will work with the Syrian authorities to minimize aviation operations over areas that are predominantly inhabited by civilians or parties to the cessation.

4. The Co-Chairs are urging all States to implement Security Council resolution 2253 (2015) by preventing any material or financial support to ISIL and the Al-Nusra Front, as well as any other groups designated as terrorist organizations by the United Nations Security Council, and to prevent attempts by such groups to cross the Syrian border. To that end, the United States is committed to intensifying

its support and assistance to regional allies to help them prevent the flow of fighters, weapons or financial support to terrorist organizations across their borders.

5. In order to maintain the effectiveness of the cessation of hostilities, the Co-Chairs are committed to undertaking efforts to develop a shared understanding of the threat posed, and territory controlled, by ISIL and the Al-Nusra Front and to consider ways to deal decisively with the threat posed by ISIL and the Al-Nusra Front to Syria and international security.

Ensuring humanitarian access

Since January 2016 the United Nations, in coordination with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, have taken significant steps to deliver assistance to 255,250 people in besieged areas and 472,975 people in hard-to-reach areas. However, many Syrians with urgent needs have yet to be reached, especially in besieged communities. Life-saving assistance, including certain medical supplies and personnel to ensure their proper use, have been denied to populations in need. United Nations assessment teams and humanitarian personnel have been barred from accessing certain besieged areas.

In order to urgently deliver humanitarian aid, the Russian Federation and the United States of America are committed to pressing the parties to ensure continuous delivery of assistance to Douma, east Harasta, Arbeen, Zamalka, Darayya, Zabadin, Fouah, Kafrayah, Madaya, Zabadani, Mouadhimiyeh, Yarmouk, Ein Terma, Hammura, Jisrein, Saqba and Kafr Batna by land, and that it continues as long as humanitarian needs persist. Deliveries by air will be continued to Deir ez-Zor for approximately 110,000 people in need. In addition, we reaffirm the need for continuous deliveries to all locations considered by the United Nations to be hard to reach, such as Al-Waer, Talbisseh, Al-Rastan and Afrin. We also recommend that the United Nations consider other locations that may meet the criteria for priority designations, including Nubul, Zahra and Hasakeh. Humanitarian access, including by medical personnel, to these most urgent areas must be a first step towards full, sustained and unimpeded access throughout the country. As called for in Security Council resolution 2258 (2015), border crossings that are necessary for humanitarian relief should remain open.

Humanitarian aid will be delivered based on need, with the full package of food, medical and non-food items as decided by the United Nations authorized for delivery by all sides. The provision of mobile health services and evacuation of urgent medical cases should be facilitated by all sides.

The Co-Chairs reaffirm that all parties must allow immediate and sustained humanitarian access to reach all people in need throughout Syria, particularly in all besieged and hard-to-reach areas, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015). The Co-Chairs commit to immediately working together with the Syrian parties to ensure no delays in the granting of approval and completion of all pending United Nations requests for access in accordance with the United Nations monthly plans. The Co-Chairs urge all parties to effectively address the issue of detainees and hostages in accordance with Council resolutions 2254 (2015) and 2258 (2015) and other relevant resolutions. We also support the United Nations appeals for continued funding of the Syria Regional Response Plan and encourage the international community and the United Nations to intensify efforts to meet the needs of internally displaced persons across Syria.

Supporting a political settlement in Syria

The Russian Federation and the United States are determined to redouble efforts to reach a political settlement of the Syrian conflict consistent with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) through the intra-Syrian negotiations in Geneva under United Nations auspices. We concur that these talks should be resumed on the basis of the Special Envoy's mediator's summary of 27 April, in particular the annex addressing the fundamental issues for a viable transition, and the section on the commonalities on the political transition. We urge all parties to the conflict, fellow International Syria Support Group members and other members of the international community to promote and support a political settlement in Syria through the full implementation of Council resolutions 2254 (2015) and 2268 (2016), the 2016 Munich and 2015 Vienna statements of the International Syria Support Group, and the 2012 Geneva communiqué. In this regard, the Co-Chairs strongly support efforts to end violence and bloodshed, counter the threat of terrorism and ensure the implementation of international humanitarian law.